

Dear Alan,

I spoke to Nina the day after I sent my letter to you. She briefly mentioned that Wisdom are distributing for you. Because of this I didn't place the advert with I.M.. Today (11/12) I recieved a letter from Nina detailing what you are doing with Wisdom. - Annmodana.

Just a couple of days ago I recieved a reply to a letter I wrote to I.M. (see photocopy). ~~She~~ She is referring to Chapter 2 (Godeviji's questions) of Chienmen revisited. Surprising that many people don't mind studying many difficult wordly subjects for years but expect Buddhism to be ~~explained~~ understood so easily. Her comment about it not being so suitable for beginners is probably justified though. Yesterday I sent Abhidhamma in Daily life and Buddhism in Daily life to I.M. (By Airmail) and enclosed a note asking them to add the following to my last letter if they print it:-

For Books by Nina Van Gorkham and  
Copies of talks by Khin Sujin write  
to Dhamma Study Group.  
Te Kauhata, NZ.

I don't mind leaving my address as a contact but now I've recieved the letter from Nina and considering that Wisdom have large advertisements in every issue of I.M. I wonder if I should have the addition changed to:-

For copies of Nina Van Gorkham's books  
write to Wisdom Publishers.

But are Wisdom in USA stocking the books? Are ~~they~~ at Wisdom in England

also distributing Buddhism in D.L. and Abhidhamma in D.L.? — Could you let me know what you think is best?

Would you like me to contact Wisdom in Australia, Singapore and USA? Anything you think I might be able to help with just let me know.

Buddhism in D.L. and Abhidhamma in D.L. would be easy to get into bookstores but for the free publishing note on the front. Perhaps you are talking with wisdom regarding publishing these?

Kind Regards  
Robert

P.S. I will send a copy of this to Nina to keep her in the picture too.

6 February 1989

Dear Nina,

I want to add my thanks to those of my husband for all the thought and effort you put into answering our letter. And we are grateful for your having sent us the two books and copies of Dhamma letters you have written to other people.

As the Abhidhamma is the aspect of the Buddha's Teachings which I find most fascinating to study, I have been working on your Abhidhamma in Daily Life already. Your non-traditional way of explaining the various paramattha dhammas I find helpful as it helps me examine some of the cittas and cetasikas in a new light.

As you have apparently long been involved in Abhidhamma studies, I thought you might be interested to see an Abhidhamma analysis of the Vedananupassana which we practise. Below are several paragraphs paraphrasing discussions with one of our teachers in Rangoon, Saya U Tint Yee. In addition to practising this technique for thirty-five years and teaching it for nearly as long, Saya U Tint Yee has worked on various aspects of Abhidhamma for decades using materials in both Pali and Burmese.

"The purifying action of this Vipassana meditation can be explained as the burning up of old kamma by carefully understanding the Anicca, Dukkha, or Anatta nature of the sensations which are being observed.

We are what we are due to past kammass. When we meditate concentrating on the body with other sense doors closed, we feel different sensations arising in our body, some pleasant, some unpleasant. These bodily sensations are rootless resultant types of consciousness, attributable to past actions (ahetuka, vipaka, kaya vinnana). When they arise as unpleasant sensations, they are results of unwholesome kamma of body, speech or mind. When they arise as pleasant sensations, they are results of wholesome kamma. The sensations themselves do not produce any kamma.

Consciousness does not stop at these sensations, however. Each and every sensation is immediately followed by a series of thought moments (one arising just as the previous one ceases): recipient consciousness, investigative consciousness, decision, seven active, javana or kamma-producing consciousnesses, and two retentive thought moments. Together they all comprise a single thought process.

If we perceive these sensations in the conventional way, thinking for example, "My arms are aching", we are not doing Vipassana meditation. The ego concept is there and ignorance plus greed, or ignorance plus hatred, are also present. So we will be creating more akusala, unwholesome, mental actions. However, if we perceive these sensations in terms of ultimate reality -- we know they are mere phenomena due to physical properties or we may know that they are merely sensations whose characteristic is Anicca. The ego will be absent from such perception and our consciousness will be rooted in non-greed, non-hate and wisdom.

In this way, resultants of past kamma are eliminated in Vipassana meditation repeatedly, from moment to moment, by means of billions and billions of thought processes with their active consciousnesses rooted in wisdom. By thus eliminating resultants and not creating new unwholesome kamma, we are gradually diminishing the strength of the kilesas. When all the kilesas are eliminated, one reaches the highest stage in the realization of the Four Noble Truths which is the objective of Vipassana meditation."

For my forthcoming book on Vipassana as taught in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, I have worked this out with explanations and charts for each of the kinds of thought processes involved. I am enclosing an abbreviated form of that discussion as an annexure to this letter.

While doing this kind of Vipassana, it is actually possible to practise all the four anupassanas mentioned in the Satipatthana Sutta. Awareness of the breath may continue while feeling the sensations in the rest of the body--kayanupassana. Vedananupassana is the primary focus of our efforts, especially awareness of the sensations produced by the Anicca nature of the kalapas of the body (kayavinnana). Awareness of the types of consciousness coming and going (cittanupassana) and of the objects of the consciousnesses or of specific Dhamma topics (dhammanupassana) are also frequently present while awareness of the subtle bodily sensations continues in the background, as it were. Of course, in strict terms these kinds of awareness do not arise simultaneously as consciousness can only have one object at a time. But the four anupassanas may arise very quickly one after the other without any (or with only minimal) intervention of irrelevant akusala thought processes.

I am happy that you were interested enough to re-read "Investigation for Insight"; it was written more than twelve years ago. In the intervening time, Jootla and I have done a lot more study of suttas and Abhidhamma as well as meditation. Last year the Buddhist Publication Society published a Wheel written by me with much help from Jootla, based on the Therigatha called "Inspiration from Enlightened Nuns".

Thanks again for writing and sending us the materials, I am sure we will continue to learn from your books.

With best wishes,

*Susan Jootla*

P.S. I find that the Abhidhamma is a stimulating field to study to strengthen one's panna and practice of the Buddha-Dhamma. I agree with you that the Path of Discrimination is very difficult to follow; and yet the Ven. Nanamoli's Visuddhimagga translation is a great help for understanding and as inspiration to work on to all aspects of the Seven Visuddhis.

I have not met any references to the Abhidhammatta Sangaha in your book. Is it not well known in Thailand? For me, it has been the most useful basic work on the subject.

Have you written anything on Patthana? All these paramattha dhammas you discuss are conditioned by each other in numerous ways and it is these relationships, these processes, that the Buddha discerned and were then taught in unbelievably thorough detail in Conditional Relations. In Burma this is the most highly revered part of the whole Pali Canon. (I have not been able to make much headway beyond the initial "Analytical Exposition of the Conditions" -- but I find myself returning to the subject over and over again. The Guide to Conditional Relations by the Ven. U Narada, published by the Pali Text Society, and a series of lectures by Saya U Tint Yee have made that much comprehensible.)